

Solidarity & Workers' Liberty



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For a workers' government

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Greek voters say:

United

Europe

without

cuts!

**See
centre
pages**

Top: demonstration in front of the Greek Parliament building; centre: pensioners' protest; bottom: homeless in Athens

Below: Alexis Tsipras, leader of the Syriza left coalition, which came second in the Greek election with 17% of the vote

What is the Alliance for Workers' Liberty?

Today one class, the working class, lives by selling its labour power to another, the capitalist class, which owns the means of production. Society is shaped by the capitalists' relentless drive to increase their wealth. Capitalism causes poverty, unemployment, the blighting of lives by overwork, imperialism, the destruction of the environment and much else.



Against the accumulated wealth and power of the capitalists, the working class has one weapon: solidarity.

The Alliance for Workers' Liberty aims to build solidarity through struggle so that the working class can overthrow capitalism. We want socialist revolution: collective ownership of industry and services, workers' control and a democracy much fuller than the present system, with elected representatives recallable at any time and an end to bureaucrats' and managers' privileges.

We fight for the labour movement to break with "social partnership" and assert working-class interests militantly against the bosses.

Our priority is to work in the workplaces and trade unions, supporting workers' struggles, producing workplace bulletins, helping organise rank-and-file groups.

We are also active among students and in many campaigns and alliances.

We stand for:

- Independent working-class representation in politics.
- A workers' government, based on and accountable to the labour movement.
- A workers' charter of trade union rights — to organise, to strike, to picket effectively, and to take solidarity action.
- Taxation of the rich to fund decent public services, homes, education and jobs for all.
- A workers' movement that fights all forms of oppression. Full equality for women and social provision to free women from the burden of housework. Free abortion on request. Full equality for lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender people. Black and white workers' unity against racism.
- Open borders.
- Global solidarity against global capital — workers everywhere have more in common with each other than with their capitalist or Stalinist rulers.
- Democracy at every level of society, from the smallest workplace or community to global social organisation.
- Working-class solidarity in international politics: equal rights for all nations, against imperialists and predators big and small.
- Maximum left unity in action, and openness in debate.
- If you agree with us, please take some copies of Solidarity to sell — and join us!

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What "Free Schools" mean

By an East London teacher

24 free schools have opened in the UK and many more are planned to open next September.

Free Schools, after academies, are the second bow in the government's plans to privatise education, under the guises of giving parents greater "choice". Further expansion will have extremely damaging consequences for comprehensive state education.

So far there has been less resistance to free schools than academies. This is partly because you cannot have a fight from within in a school that doesn't exist.

STYLE

The free schools agenda offers a certain style of education aimed at niche audiences, with no public accountability and many freedoms that set it apart from the mainstream.

The programme encourages social segregation, sets schools up to compete rather than collaborate, and could be the means by which the Tories introduce state-funded schools which are profit-making businesses.

Free schools were originally proposed as an opportunity for parents to get together and open a school tailored to the specific needs of their children. This is not the way the policy has been realised.

Even if it were, there would be serious problems. How many parents feel able to go through the demanding and time-consuming process of applying to open and then running a school? How would they choose who they wanted to go to school with their child? Why would they have the necessary knowledge and experience to make good decisions about teaching and learning?

Educational consultancy organisations, charities and religious groups are behind most free schools.

Although it is currently

against the law for these groups to make profit out of their schools, if the UK follows the Swedish model, schools as profit-making businesses will not be far away.

Free schools are outside local authority control and are therefore not democratically accountable. Free school governing bodies can have less parental and staff representation; they have greater control over the curriculum they teach and the children they enrol.

Although many free schools claim to adhere to the local authority admissions policies, recent research shows 75% of free schools have a lower percentage of children eligible for free school meals than their local average. In the absence of explicit selection procedures, covert selection of students may include having a compulsory uniform that is expensive, holding interviews for prospective children and parents, and having high exclusion rates.

REMIT

This ensures a group of students who are generally more likely to "succeed" within the limited remit of assessed educational standards.

As free schools will need to buy in services for students with special needs at added cost, these schools may not be the most inclusive of places.

Some free schools, such as Toby Young's new grammar school in west London — marketed as a place to go to get lessons in Latin — have been set up as a direct alternative to the community state education provided in local comprehensive schools.

In other cases a free school trust may not intend to compete with local schools, and yet through its very existence, does. That's what the choice agenda is about. Predictably, free schools have attracted more middle class parents and children, impacting upon the true comprehen-

sive nature of surrounding schools.

The funding of free schools is siphoned off from local authority budgets. As the pot of money that supports all other local schools gets smaller, centrally provided services are harder to maintain. In theory, free schools get no more money per child than community schools; yet many operate on very small intakes, attracting parents who would opt for a private school if they could afford it.

Working outside of national agreements on terms and conditions for teachers and support staff makes workers vulnerable to having their pay being cut and workload increased, in order to make these small intake schools financially viable.

Free schools are bad news. If allowed to flourish they will be another nail in the coffin of comprehensive community education.

A good local school for all!

Case study: Canary Wharf College

Canary Wharf College took over the premises of the Docklands Pupil Referral Unit as the local authority could not afford to make the adjustments to the building Ofsted deemed necessary for it to be an adequate building for young people to be educated in.

The free school defines itself as Christian in ethos and therefore can select 50% of its intake on religious grounds. It was advertised in private nurseries and gated housing estates which sit inside a community where the majority live in social housing and which has a substantial Bengali population.

Canary Wharf College mirrors the polarised social circumstances of the Isle of Dogs community —

Not for council house kids

the towers of finance and penthouse apartments with river views on one side of the road, the working-class community whose locality has changed beyond all recognition thanks to a "regeneration" programme from which ordinary people have benefitted not a jot, on the other.

It is not cynical or neurotic to see the opening of this school as an appeal to the bankers of its name-sake.

One look at the website or the school badge confirms this.

NHS workers under pressure... but fighting back

By Todd Hamer

Workfare schemes are being "piloted" at a number of hospitals including West Birmingham hospital, Frinnage Hospital in South Tees and Stockport NHS foundation trust.

Untrained claimants are being forced into hospitals to care for the sick at the same time that paid staff are being served redundancy notices.

However, there are also

stirrings of worker resistance to these attacks.

On 16 May, cleaners working for Carillion at Great Western Hospital, Swindon will strike as part of a long campaign against institutionalised bullying, discrimination and corruption.

Carillion bosses made the workers give them "gifts" in exchange for booking their entitled leave and shift requests.

GMB members are set to take their 19th day of action after senior manage-

ment have admitted problems but have failed to make changes.

GMB members in Derriford Hospital, Plymouth, may move towards industrial ballot after contractor Serco attempted to unilaterally change their shift patterns. Serco is also attempting to derecognise the union.

Finally, 600 cleaning and catering staff at Addenbrooke's Hospital, Cambridge, are moving towards a strike ballot after subcontractor

Medirest attempted to cut 3,000 a year from workers' wages, through a change in the shift pattern.

These disputes should be the start of a united fightback in the NHS to defend pay, terms and conditions.

If health workers can rebuild their confidence in their collective strength then this can only aid the battle to save the NHS from the private sector vultures.

● More on the NHS: back page

Brotherhood splits behind Egyptian poll

By Rosalind Robson

In Egypt's 2011-12 parliamentary elections reactionary religious parties swept the board.

The Muslim Brotherhood (standing as the Freedom and Justice Party) won 47.2% of the vote and 235 seats out of 498. Salafist candidates won 123 seats with 30% of the vote (with the al-Nur party winning 107 seats). A depressing result for socialists, secularists and democrats. But what will happen in Egypt's Presidential election on 23-24 May?

Under Egypt's provisional constitution the President appoints the Prime Minister and has a lot of power.

Last month the Constitutional Assembly, dominated by Islamists, was suspended after a court ruled it was unrepresentative of Egyptian society — lacking in women, youth and minorities. That adds

another complication to an already fraught political situation.

According to (perhaps not reliable) opinion polls the front runners for President are Amr Moussa, a candidate from (but not of) the old regime and Abdel Moneim Abu Fotouh who, since leaving the Brotherhood, has taken a "moderate Islamist" stance.

An election of a more "personalised" nature means both of these candidates are trying, to one degree or another, to have more heterogeneous appeal.

Moussa has said Egyptian laws should be based on Islamic teachings but also said they could not be exactly applied to Coptic Christians. Abul-Fotouh has said he is not for a theocracy.

There are 13 candidates in total including the liberal Khalid Ali, Hisham al-Bastawisi of the Tajammu Party and Abu al-Izz al-Hariri of the Socialist Pop-

ular Alliance Party (Nasserist in origin with which the group linked to the British SWP, the Revolutionary Socialists have been allied). The Socialist Popular Alliance Party is now in the Revolution Must Continue Alliance and that includes ex-Brotherhood youth.

SPLITS

The background to this election are splits in the Brotherhood.

Since February 2011 the pressure from the Salafists, generational differences, dissatisfaction with the Brotherhood's relationship with the army (which in the form of the Supreme Council of the Armed Forces still holds power in Egypt), participation as a "party" in politics, and adaptation to Egypt's limited democratic politics (as opposed to that dictated by religious teachings) has caused led to these splits. The splits have been:

- The formation under Abou el-Ala Madi of the Wasat (Centre) Party, which models itself on the Turkish Justice and Development Party.

- The formation of the Renaissance Party by the Brotherhood's deputy Supreme Guide, Dr Muhammad Habib. (Their candidate in the election, Dr Muhammad Selim al-Awa is vying for Brotherhood votes).

- And Abu-Futouh himself, a former member of the Brotherhood's Guidance Committee, decided to run for President without permission. He has declared himself to be the candidate of the Brotherhood's youth.

Meanwhile other Brotherhood people are joining up with Salafists.

Under pressure from the array of candidates vying for Brotherhood votes, at the last minute, the Brotherhood itself put up a candidate (having said it would not). After their first

choice was disqualified from standing, Mohammad Mursi became the candidate. One dimension therefore in the election is competition among the Islamists for authenticity of faithfulness. Mursi has stressed the slogan "Islam is the solution".

The Salafist candidate was barred from standing and the Salafists are backing Abu-Futouh.

Competition between the Islamists may give one of

other of those candidates associated with the old regime, including the ex-Foreign Minister Amr Moussa, an advantage.

Meanwhile demonstrations against SCAF, ending in severe repression and arrests, continue. These have involved a broad political spectrum.

Since Mubarak was ousted nearly 12,000 people have been tried and convicted through military courts.

Morocco: crackdown against the Berbers

The new Islamist-controlled government in Morocco has been engaging in increased repression against the social movement which started last year under the name of the "20 February Movement", as the Moroccan expression of the Arab Spring.

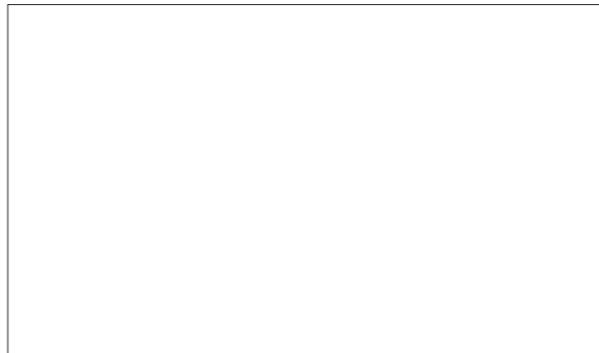
In the Berber-speaking Rif region, this repression has been intense for several weeks, with housing demolitions, widespread use of tear gas and other weapons, with deaths and many injuries.

Ziyad Mohammed, an activist of the Trotskyist group Revolutionary Marxist Current, spoke to Solidarity.

The Rif region where al-Hoceima is, it is a unique region.

Historically there has been great resistance to French and Spanish colonialism, led by Abd el-Krim al-Khattabi, who led the Rif region in war against the invaders in the 1920s. The French and Spain tried to destroy this free region, using poison gas and weapons of mass destruction, for the first time in world history.

In this region there is still a culture of resistance against the monarchy which has not grown up just recently — but has always existed since the time



Protesting youth carry the flag of the Rif republic of 1921-27

of the first resistance to the monarchy.

M20F demos were more advanced than those of other young people belonging to the movement in Morocco.

They were the first to raise the slogan "down with the king" and their slogans were based on the right to work and housing for all and free healthcare.

The way they demanded this was by "the riot method". They went into the street and confronted the police. The police were very aggressive against these young people, and the youth have waged guerilla war — not with guns, but by other methods, burning cars, taking streets and buildings and so on. So the regime has armed itself against these young people.

The youth have defended themselves, taking

up railways and paving slabs to defend their areas, and the result is the stoppage of all economic life in the regions affected. There have been deaths, because the youth are in a rage against the monarchy and the forces of repression.

The villagers have organised marches, marching dozens of kilometres in order to concentrate their forces in a particular part of the region. They have marched to government offices with a view to concentrating all the forces of the Rif.

In response the government has sent the army into the region and the Rif is currently a militarised zone.

The sharpening of the repression in the Rif has taken place this year. But there has always been a greater level of repression in the Rif since the start of

the movement.

In Casablanca or in the capital, people have come into the streets every Sunday, very peacefully, with banners. In the Rif, people have been coming out with molotovs and face masks. But with the new government of Islamists, the repression of the Rif has been increased. The Islamists are in conflict with the nationalists who are asserting the non-Arab nature of their region. The Islamists are playing the role of Arab chauvinists vis-à-vis the Rif.

But for all the courage and the mobilisation, there is not really a co-ordination or an organisation, which could develop a programme for the movement. As it is, it remains quite spontaneous and "courageous".

There are three main lines of the mobilisation in the Rif: national rights for the Amazigh minority, and the separatists of the Rif, who are based in the linguistic, cultural Amazigh movement, they are chauvinists of the Amazigh.

Then there are the Stalinists, and then there are the CMR, who are not so numerous but who are organised in the committees of the towns and agricultural workers' organisations.

Stop the attack on special needs children!

By Janine Booth

Children's Minister Sarah Teather has announced changes to provision for children with special needs.

Despite her claim that this will create "a more integrated and less bureaucratic system", the plans amount to a significant attack on support for the most needy kids, perhaps a new low even for this government's austerity drive.

Government plans include giving parents a "personal budget" for their children. Rather than being able to expect the support and services that our kids need, parents will need to "shop around" for services, putting cost rather than need at the centre of decision-making.

Currently, if a school identifies a pupil as having special needs, it applies "School Action" and "School Action Plus" to help, and if the child still needs extra help, a Statement of Special Educational Needs may be awarded, which may bring extra resources to the school for that child. Around one in five children are in this process, with 2.7% having a Statement.

The government thinks that "too many" kids are getting this individual attention. An Ofsted report in 2010 claimed that the category "special needs" was being "used too widely", and right-wing cheerleaders are now claiming that schools and parents are "abusing" the system to get resources for children.

If "too many" kids are

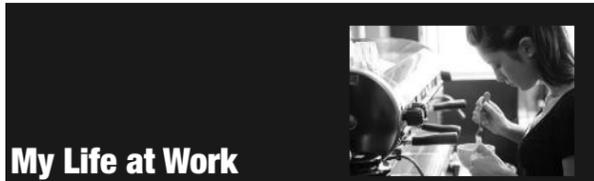
being labelled as having special needs, that suggests to me that our underfunded, fragmented school system is failing to meet children's needs, leaving more and more of them with unmet needs which require special attention. The government should tackle this problem rather than penalising our kids.

Some of the increase in "special needs" provision is because progress over the last few decades has recognised and addressed conditions such as dyslexia and autism. Kids today get support for conditions that were overlooked when I was at school — yet this government seems to think this is a bad thing.

Teather's changes include replacing the current system with a "single assessment process". But while the current system is far from perfect, parents of special needs kids will fear loss of essential support if it is scrapped. My ten year-old son Joe has Asperger Syndrome, and his Statement gives him one-to-one support from a Teaching Assistant, speech and language therapy, a personal workstation in class, and more. It was a difficult, uphill struggle to get the Statement for him, and without it, he would be unable to engage with his classes, his talents left undeveloped, getting nothing from school but distress.

Parents, students, school workers and unions, disability campaigners and others need to unite to stop this attack and win decent provision which meets the needs of every child.

Overheated, overworked, underpaid



My Life at Work

Sam Carrow is a catering worker in a hospital in north west England

I work a minimum wage job for a chain coffee outlet in a big hospital. I'm employed on an agency contract, but there's a mix of different employment types.

Some workers, who used to work in the hospital's own canteen, are directly employed by the NHS and have better pay, terms, and conditions. That creates tension.

Agency staff are supposed to work a minimum of 20 hours a week but our contracts are "fully flexible", which means we aren't guaranteed to work that minimum.

The atmosphere in the workplace is okay, and people tend to get on with each other. That friendliness can sometimes be a problem as issues are viewed as "personal problems" to be sorted out between mates rather than symptoms of wider problems in the workplace itself.

The conditions are quite hard as they involve being on your feet and moving around, often in proximity to very hot machinery, for your entire shift. We only get one, unpaid, break and the workplace is frequently understaffed which means we all have to go faster. The workplace is often overheated too, which makes conditions unpleasant.

People notice these problems and will grumble about them but there's an attitude that that's just the way things are. A lot of people put their heads down and get on with it.

As well as understaffing, the other thing people complain most about is finding the work boring and unfulfilling.

Some of the staff have worked elsewhere in the hospital and people do have a sense of being hospital workers rather than just coffee shop workers. I think that makes people make more of an effort than if we were working in an outlet on the high street.

I've joined Unison, but no-one else in the workplace is in a union.

The older workers and workers with families do see what they're doing as a more long-term job, but younger ones see themselves as transient.

Small changes like giving us paid breaks or getting double time for working bank holidays would make a big difference. A big improvement would be to level up everyone's pay rates so the agency workers got paid the same as the directly-employed staff. The agency staff are all aware that we're on worse money.

I've talked to workers a few times about how hospitals outsourcing employment and services is part of NHS privatisation.

The class war at the top of British universities

Platform

By Edd Bauer

There is a rift emerging not just within British universities, but between them. The National Campaign Against Fees and Cuts has released a report detailing the incredible expansion of executive pay in the last decade.

High pay at the elite universities has spiralled out of control; a total of £382 million is being spent on the highest paid members of staff in just 19 universities, roughly double what it was a decade ago.

These universities are spending nearly 2% more of their total income on high paid jobs than they were a decade ago, while cutting back on student support and now nearly £4 in every £100 is going on paying those earning over £100,000.

This rapid expansion in the money being paid to the top staff in elite universities is twinned with cuts hitting the universities which are most accessible to students from low socio-economic backgrounds.

At the same time the elite universities, which have the highest proportion of rich students attending them, are receiving increases in their grants. A total of £940 million taken out of the non-elite universities is arguably being squandered on high pay for those at the top of elite universities.

ICEBERG

This is the tip of the iceberg in terms of the class war between UK universities. There is a set piece battle over privatisation that will define the sector.

A battle is being fought over the entry of for-profit providers, the entry of which will hit the poorest hard to the benefit of the rich.

Private for-profit universities in America are taking short cuts and offering "subprime" degrees with little real value.

There is a battle going on to ensure this doesn't happen. The organisation UK Universities, which democratically represents all UK universities, is recommending that the role of the Quality Assurance Agency is tightened and strengthened, to ensure all for profit providers are regulated by any public partner.

Laughing all the way to the bank. Professor Andrew Hamilton from Oxford University was the highest-paid vice-chancellor after receiving some £424,000 in salary, benefits and pension contributions in 2010/11.

However, not all universities are playing the team game to protect the public education system.

Russell Group Universities like the University of Birmingham are pushing for the QAA to not require any real public scrutiny on the quality of private providers.

These private providers are after all not a threat to the elite UK universities, like Birmingham, which have massive budgets and well-established reputations. Instead the elite universities stand to gain by a useful income provided by offering accreditation services.

Overpaid executives of some elite British universities, along with the government, are lining up to replace the decent public universities that serve well the poorest students with private for-profit universities that will exploit them.

• Edd Bauer is VP Education at the University of Birmingham Guild of Students, and an activist with the NCAFC, and People and Planet. To read the report, see anticuts.com/2012/04/16/vice-chancellor-high-pay-report/

Anarchists disrupt May Day rallies



The Left

By Tom Unterrainer

Members of the Anarchist Federation in Nottingham, the "Autonomous Nottingham" group and some individuals staged a protest at the Nottingham May Day rally which ended up disrupting the whole rally.

The anarchists opposed the inclusion of Mansfield Labour MP Alan Meale on the platform of speakers.

Meale is undoubtedly a self-serving, middle-of-the-road Labour MP. He was once a supporter of the miners in their battle against the Thatcher government, but any vestiges of explicit working class politics have long since vanished from sight. Meale has been knighted by the Queen. He was embroiled in the expenses scandal and he was loyal voting fodder under Blair and Brown.

So how did he come to be invited to a May Day rally organised by Nottinghamshire Trades Council? The official explanation is that by extending an invitation to Meale, people would be encouraged to attend the march and rally from the north of the county.

AWL and other delegates to the trades council didn't like the idea and spoke against the invitation at Trades Council meetings. Others weren't too keen but were willing to accept the invitation. The majority saw no problem with inviting Meale — or indeed any other Labour politician — to a May Day event, either because they saw it as a good oppor-

tunity to draw him into the active labour movement, the better to put on some political pressure, or because they are active supporters of, and trade union affiliates to, the Labour Party. Some delegates to the Trades Council are even Labour councillors.

Should Meale have been invited? No. But the ins-and-outs of his invitation are secondary to the technical display of crass, ultra-left and sectarian "militancy" put on by some anarchists. Their actions disrupted the meeting and prevented Meale from speaking.

AWL members and others in Nottingham — including a number of other anarchists — thought behaviour to be anti-democratic and counter-productive: a childish and disproportionate stunt that alienated and irritated a good many trade union activists.

Unfortunately, the stunt was not an isolated incident and seems to have been part of a national strategy. AFed members carried out similar "actions" against less starkly offensive Labour representatives in Manchester and Newcastle. The latter action (whether by accident or design) was carried out in conjunction with the ultra-Stalinist Revolutionary Communist Group.

A full report on the day, further analysis of AFed and a response from Nottingham AFed members can be found at the links below.

- Report from Pete Radcliff on events at Nottingham May Day — tinyurl.com/afedtantrum
- Analysis by Tom Unterrainer of AFed in Nottingham — tinyurl.com/afednottm
- Replies from Nottingham AFed tinyurl.com/maydayreply1 and tinyurl.com/maydayreply2

Labour NEC vote

By Gerry Bates

Ballot papers to elect the six constituency representatives on the Labour Party's National Executive (NEC) go out on 25 May and must be returned by 13 June.

For some time a "centre-left" slate has won three, or sometimes four, of those six places. Since the unions have 12 of the 33 places on the NEC, this means that if the unions take a stand on an issue — and if the issue comes to the NEC at all — those constituency reps can decide issues, as they helped decide last year's election for Labour Party general secretary against the diehard-Blairite candidate.

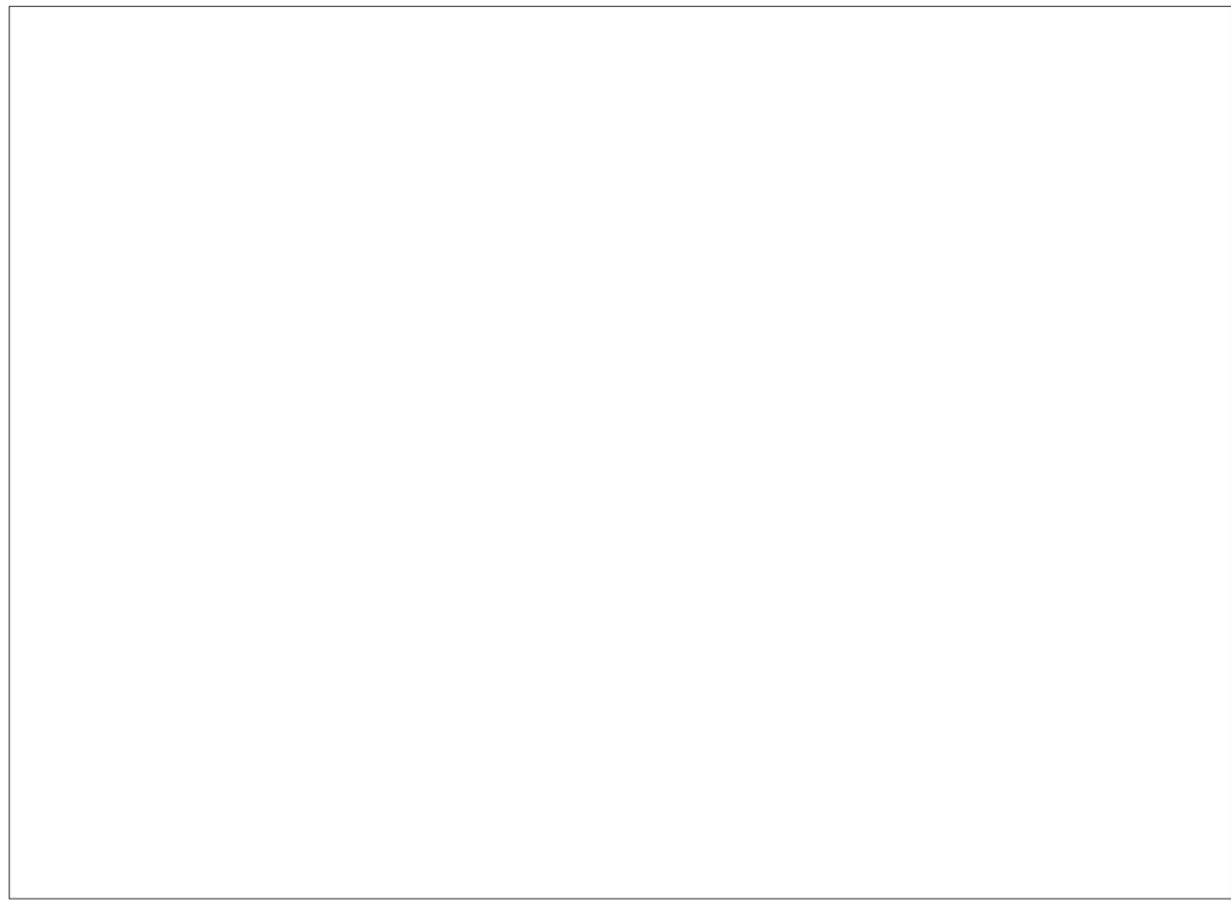
Even though some of the "centre-left" slate are by no means reliable, left Labour groupings urge a vote for the whole slate, to block the hard right.

Over the next month (up to a 22 June closing date) local Labour Parties can also submit rule-change proposals for Labour's annual conference. The most important of those being circulated by the Campaign for Labour Party Democracy is one to give conference the right to vote by parts on large documents presented to it.

Local Labour Parties which submit a rule change thereby (under current rules) lose their chance to submit a contemporary policy motion (in September).

But rule changes have to be put on the conference agenda, unless they are declared out of order, whereas a local Labour Party's policy motion has only an outside chance of reaching conference floor.

- NEC: grassrootslabour.net
- Rule change: bit.ly/lp-rule



Brooks is charged. Her friend David Cameron should resign

Rebekah Brooks, the former chief executive of News International, is to be charged with conspiracy to pervert the course of justice along with five others (including her husband).

The charges is that she tried to conceal evidence from police conducting investigations into phone hacking and bribes to public officials. Brooks and her co-defendants will appear at Westminster Magistrates' Court on 13 June. The potential maximum sentence for this crime is life, but those convicted of it serve an average of 10 months in jail.

The charges are the first to be made since "Operation Weeting", the police investigation into the phone hacking scandal, began in January 2011. The other individuals charged include Mark Hanna, News International's head of security.

On Friday 11 May, Brooks revealed at the Leveson Inquiry that David Cameron had personally sent her a message of commiseration when she resigned from her position at News International in July 2011, telling her to "keep her head up".

HORSE

The admission followed previous revelations of the extent of the relationship between Cameron and Brooks, including the farcical "Horsegate".

Brooks and her husband had been loaned a semi-retired police horse by Scotland Yard, and David Cameron rode it while visiting them on their farm in the Cotswolds. (Cameron initially refused to admit this).

A close personal friendship between the Prime Minister and the head of the country's most powerful media empire is troubling enough by itself. When that individual is also someone accused of attempting to destroy evidence that implicates them and their company in illegal practices, including phone hacking and bribery, a close connection between them and any public official represents an affront to democracy.

That she was on close enough terms with the upper

echelons of Scotland Yard to secure the loan of a police horse is also a disgraceful fact.

Although the charges are the first brought against Operation Weeting arrestees, 23 people have so far been arrested as part of the operation, along with 22 arrested in connection with Operation Elveden, a separate police investigation into bribery. More charges are likely to follow.

The picture, then, is of an enormous corporate media monolith controlling vast swathes of media output in Britain, presided over by an alleged criminal with a close personal friendship with senior figures within the British state. That level of collusion and enmeshment between those who control the mass media and the state has dangerous implications for democracy.

CAMERON

Brooks will answer her charges in court. For his role in the scandal, Cameron should resign.

Even those of us opposed to the prison system will find it difficult not to crack a smile if Brooks and her cronies are sent down for what they have done.

Let us hope these arrests will open up a debate on why democracy cannot function properly while the media, a major factor in shaping public opinion, is owned, and operated for the profit of union-bashing scumbags like Rupert Murdoch, to reflect their prejudices, to promote their interests, and to seal their friendships with elected politicians.

Real justice will only be served when the Murdoch media empire of which Brooks was part is broken up and the mass media taken into public ownership.

The alternative to the corrupt, corporate media of Murdoch and Brooks is not a totalitarian state-media — or an impossible and undesirable "objective" media that would simply communicate news without any analysis or comment — but a publicly-owned media industry with democratic controls to guarantee pluralism and the representation of minority viewpoints.

Help the AWL raise £20,000

Now the weather is improving (at least we hope) Workers' Liberty members plan to spend the coming weekend (19-20 May) starting and restarting public sales of *Solidarity* in city centres and on estates.

Increasingly we are finding more people want to stop and talk to socialists selling papers. To talk about almost anything that comes under the general rubric of "the state of the world." Why do bankers continue to claim massive bonuses? (Still!) What is going to happen in Europe?...

People don't always agree with us, far from it. But these conversations, the debates we have is one way to ensure that *Solidarity* stays relevant.

Help us widen our circle of readers but supporting us financially. But you can also contribute by writing for *Solidarity* — a letter, a report, a review, a feature. Or why not take copies of *Solidarity* to sell.

You can help by:

● Taking out a monthly standing order. There is a form at www.workersliberty.org/resources and below. Please post to us at the AWL address below.

● Making a donation. You can send it to us at the address below (cheques payable to "AWL") or do it online at www.workersliberty.org/donate

● Organising a fundraising event

● Taking copies of *Solidarity* to sell at your workplace, university/college or campaign group.

● Get in touch to discuss joining the AWL.

More information: 07796 690 874 /

awl@workersliberty.org / AWL, 20E Tower Workshops, 58 Riley Rd, SE1 3DG.



Total raised so far: £12,948

Once again we raised only a small amount last week — £100 — from donations. Thanks to Mick and Tom.

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Leaders try to crush election mandate

By Theodora Polenta

Since Greece's election on 6 May, frantic attempts have been made to try cook up a pro-cuts government of some sort in defiance of the Greek people's electoral wishes.

As *Solidarity* goes to press on 15 May, it looks as if Greek president Karolos Papoulias will take the risky course of calling new elections on 10 or 17 June, hoping that between now and then the voters can be blackmailed into voting for pro-cuts parties.

Despite the grossly unfair Greek electoral system, which gives as a bonus an additional 50 seats to the first party (so ND [Tories] ended up with 108 seats instead of 58), ND and Pasok have in total 149 seats. Therefore, they need the cooperation of one more party to form a coalition.

Theoretically Democratic Left could provide them with the seats, since Pasok and ND have agreed to seek a moderate re-adjustment of the cuts package. However, Pasok, ND, and the Democratic Left insisted that Syriza must be part of the coalition.

Democratic Left and Pasok even proposed to Syriza to form a mini version of Syriza's "government of the left" — that is a coalition government with Syriza's anti-cuts manifesto and no political pre-conditions, with the participation of Democratic Left, but depending on support of the pro-cuts Pasok and a vote of confidence from ND.

The leader of the Greek bosses' federation made a statement expressing his belief that Syriza should "recognise its responsibility" by being part in a national united government.

BLACKMAIL

National and international blackmail has been employed, with Venizelos, Samaras, Papademos, Junker, Barroso, Rehn, Merkel, and Schäuble all threatening that if Greece does not form a government and which will respect the signed agreements then the bailout fund installments will be suspended and Greece will be bankrupt and kicked out of the eurozone.

All the members of the political establishment have demanded that the Greek people's electoral wishes should be ignored, and a pro-cuts coalition government. They want Syriza to be part of this government to appease the people that supported it and to give a friendly anti-cuts mask to it.

Syriza has not surrendered and has refused to be blackmailed.

Despite the fact that the three left wing parties (Syriza, Democratic Left, and KKE) have fewer than 150 seats between and therefore the numbers do not add up for them to form a government, Syriza has called for a government of the left, as a propaganda slogan and in line with its electoral promises.

KKE refused to meet Syriza.

Syriza proposed six points to the other political leaders as pre-conditions for Syriza's participation in a coalition government:

- Introduce proportional representation
- Scrap protection for MPs from being prosecuted for acts of corruption and robbery of public money.
- Reverse all the anti-working-class policies implemented during the last two years — wage and pension reductions and abolition of collective bargaining agreements, union rights etc
- Elect a committee to examine and assess the Greek debt and write off the "illegal" part of the debt
- Freeze all debt payments. A moratorium on the debt for at least three years.
- Nationalisation of the banks under workers' control.

Instead of spending time behind closed doors, Alexis Tsipras and other Syriza representatives opened up the discussion on the need for left unity and the manifesto of a left government to other left-wing organisations which did not gain parliamentary representation, like the anti-capitalist coalition Antarsya, the moderate Green party, and Louka Katseli's "Social Agreement" party (an anti-cuts splinter from Pasok).

Syriza organised meetings with trade union representatives, progressive academics and councillors. Tsipras called an extended people's meeting at Nikaia which, at a few hours' notice, drew thousands of people. This massive par-

ticipation shows the people's willingness to get active and themselves be the agents of a political change and progressive solution to the crisis.

Tsipras declared: "It is Syriza's commitment not to be introspective and self indulgent but open itself to society. We are not going to take decisions behind closed doors or within our party's offices, but alongside the people that believe in us and support us... Syriza's responsibility is to the people and the social movements, and Syriza commits itself to fight for the implementation of its electoral manifesto".

This is a positive move. The bit that is missing or not as developed is recognition of the centrality of the working class in shaping the future, a call for escalation of industrial action in response to the continuation of attacks on the working class, a call for the "indignant citizens'" movement to occupy Syntagma Square and open up discussions in defence of the people's electoral wishes, and a call for new elections to make clearer the left wing mandate.

The only answer that serves the popular and left-wing trend of the 6 May elections is the fight for a real left-wing government, a workers' government.

As a minimum this government should ensure the cancellation and reversal of all the cuts, opening the road for the enforcement of a radical programme with the working people at its centre.

The call for a workers' government has a few critical prerequisites.

First of all, the people should be in the streets. Without the escalation of the struggles, a workers' government cannot impose its program and cannot survive.

Secondly it requires a united front with the other forces of the left (KKE and Antarsya) within a framework of solidarity. A workers' government dependent upon votes of confidence from pro-system ruling-class parties is not a workers' government.

It is important to remember that according to the Marxist tradition the "moment" of the workers' government is only a transitional stage in the struggle for socialism.

The left has a duty not to forget the lessons of Chile, where a left-wing government was overthrown by the military in 1973 and replaced by a dictatorship that murdered at least 30,000 workers.

DRIVE

On 6 May Pasok and ND plummeted from 5,300,000 votes in the October 2009 elections to 2,000,000 votes. Their combined percentage went from 77% to 32%.

Their partner in crime, the other party in Papademos's coalition, Laos, saw its percentage plummet from 5.6% to 2.9%, losing all its seats in parliament despite its last-minute turn against the second cuts memorandum.

The almost two million votes for the left wing parties (Syriza, KKE, Democratic Left, Antarsya, and others) expressed, albeit still in an incomplete way, the drive of the people towards a left-wing solution to the crisis.

Syriza gained an extra 746,000 votes, topping one million in total, and saw its electoral percentage increase from 4.6% to 16.78%. Among young voters and in the inner-city working-class areas, Syriza came first.

The diehard-Stalinist KKE stagnated, gaining only 18,000 extra votes (from 7.5% up to 8.48%), despite its strong trade union links and its identification with the Greek Steel workers, who the two years of struggle against the cuts.

The votes for the revolutionary left coalition Antarsya increased by 51,000 votes, 0.36% to 1.19%.

Democratic Left, a right-wing legalistic splinter from Synaspismos (the main group in the Syriza coalition) got 6.11%.

The political parties which scored below 3% and so did not enter parliament totalled 19% between them, more than the vote for ND. The openly Nazi party Xrisi Aygi (Golden Dawn) increased its percentage from 0.29% to 6.97%.

Xrisi Aygi did not dramatically increase its percentage in the inner city and the ghettos, where it operates like a state within a state, persecuting refugees and other vulnerable sections, but it did sharply increase its percentage in remote villages and islands where there are no refugees.

This suggests that the majority of the people that voted for Xrisi Aygi are not definitely Nazis and some of them not even structurally racists, but vote for Xrisi Aygi to express a vague nihilistic anti-systemic view.

Greece quitting the euro? Then what?

European Central Bank officials, and other bankers, are now openly discussing the possibility of Greece quitting the euro. How would it work?

There is no formal procedure by which a state can quit the euro. Probably things would start with money promised to Greece by the ECB not being paid because the Greek government had failed to make required cuts. Then the Greek government would be unable to make its debt payments, including to the ECB.

The ECB would block the Greek government printing more euros. It might demand that the Greek central bank pay the 100 billion euros it currently owes to the intra-eurozone banking system (much of it, to the Bundesbank). One of the tricky things about scenarios is that pivotal political decisions would be taken by the ECB, which is supposed to be "independent" of all politics.

The Greek government would probably have to nationalise all Greek's big banks, since they would become insolvent with the government stopping debt payments. It would run out of euros for its daily domestic spending, and Greek importers might have trouble fixing payments.

The government would have to coin new money (a restored drachma) to pay wages and so on. How it would do that is unclear: it would take at least three months just to print and distribute the notes, modify the computer systems, and so on.

Wealthy Greeks would whisk their euros abroad even faster than they have done already. The Greek government might feel obliged to impose controls on movements of money, which would put Greece's EU membership as well as its eurozone membership in question.

Even on the most benign scenario — suggested by those economists who recommend Argentina's default in 2001 as a model for Greece, though there are reasons to think that Greece would find it much harder to recover after default than Argentina did — there would be a drastic crash in Greece's economy. A negotiated Greek exit from the euro might involve some EU and ECB aid to soften the crash (and so reduce the reverberations across Europe), but that is hard to predict.

Even if it were a *workers' government* in Greece being forced out of the euro, it would face an economic crash: the workers' government would deal with it by efforts to spread workers' rule wider across Europe, and by expropriating Greece's wealthy to ease the sufferings of the majority.

Banks in Italy, Spain, Portugal, and Ireland would suffer from Greece cutting off payments, and the governments would step in to help.

The creditworthiness of those troubled governments would slump further, maybe into a ruinous spiral like Greece's which would lead to them, too, defaulting.

With a positive initiative from the revolutionary forces and with the formation of a united front Xrisi Aygi can quickly be sent to the dustbin of history, where they belong.

Syriza's success was due to its persistent call for a united left, and its emphasis on the necessity for a pan-European struggle putting at the front of its agenda the necessity for Europe-wide overthrow of the pro-austerity governments and explaining that a left wing electoral result in Greece would have a big impact in the rest of Europe.

KKE, however, responded to the people's desire for a left-wing solution by calling on them to vote for KKE so that an electorally stronger KKE in parliament would enhance working-class defensive battles.

In its election manifesto KKE raised a series of radical transitional demands (though not described as such by KKE, due to its Stalinist ideological hang ups). But those demands lacked any use as a guide for action, as KKE declared that most of its demands could only be implemented under a workers' government in the distant future.

KKE effectively denounced the Greek workers that voted for Syriza as being trapped by utopian reformist illusions, and stated that Syriza will end up implementing the same policies as Pasok and ND as things can change only under workers' power in the indeterminate distant future.

Since 6 May election KKE has had page after page in its newspaper *Rizospastis* attacking and "exposing" Syriza as traitors to the interests of the Greek working class and as a force that will divert people's anger into the illusions of parliamentary solutions.

KKE organises rallies with "Against the EU" as its major slogan, segregating and isolating its troops from the rest of the working class.

An open letter to Britain's left: Do you want the EU to break up?

Dear comrades,

Do you really want the European Union to break up? The majority of Greek workers do not. In the 6 May election, 70% voted for parties opposed to the cuts, but polls show that 80% want Greece to stay within the EU and within the euro.

The party that did best in the election, the left coalition Syriza, says that a left government in Greece should refuse the cuts, call the bluff of the EU leaders — who may want cuts, but also want to stop the eurozone breaking up — and enforce a renegotiation.

They want a united Europe without cuts. So do we. If the Greek left wins a majority, and the EU refuses to concede, then we want a workers' government in Greece which will break with EU leaders but not "leave Europe" — which will instead fight to spread workers' rule across Europe.

Yet for decades now most of the British left — and the left in a few other European countries, such as Denmark — has agitated "against the EU". The agitation has suggested, though rarely said openly, we should welcome and promote every pulling-apart of the EU, up to and including the full re-erection of barriers between nation-states.

Now it's not certain that the EU/ ECB/ IMF troika will dare cut off funds to the Greek government, and force it into "defaulting" on its debt (failing to make payments on the debt when they're due). If Greece defaults, it is not certain that it will quit or be forced out of the euro.

If Greece quits the euro, it's not certain that the exit will set off an unravelling of the whole eurozone. And even if the whole eurozone unravels, the underlying EU structure could remain solid.

DEBATABLE

An argument can be made — debatable, but not absurd, and not necessarily "anti-EU" — that realistically a Greek government would do better now to negotiate an orderly exit from the euro, rather than to plunge on towards a high probability of forced and chaotic exit.

The economist who has argued most strongly for Greece to negotiate an exit from the euro, Costas Lapavistas, also insists that he is *not* calling for Greece to quit the EU.

Yet the possibility of a serious unravelling of the patchwork, bureaucratic semi-unification of Europe, slowly developed over the last sixty years, is more real today than ever before. The decisive push for unravelling, if it comes, will probably be from the nationalist and populist right.

And that calls the bluff of a whole swathe of the British left.

For decades, most of the British left has been "anti-EU" as a matter of faith. In Britain's 1975 referendum on withdrawing from the EU, almost the whole left, outside AWL's forerunner Workers' Fight, campaigned for withdrawal. Since then the left has hesitated explicitly to demand withdrawal. It has limited itself to "no to bosses' Europe" agitation, implying but not spelling out a demand for the EU to be broken up.

The agitation has allowed the left to eat its cake and have

it. The left can chime in with populist-nationalist "anti-Europe" feeling, which is stronger in Britain than in any other EU country. It can also cover itself by suggesting that it is not really anti-European, but only dislikes the "bosses'" character of the EU.

As if a confederation of capitalist states could be anything other than capitalist. As if the cross-Europe policy of a collection of neo-liberal governments could be anything other than neo-liberal.

As if the material force behind neo-liberal cuts were the relatively flimsy Brussels bureaucracy, rather than the mighty bureaucratic-military-industrial complexes of member states. As if the answer is to oppose confederation and cross-Europeanism as such, rather than the capitalist, neo-liberal, bureaucratic character of both member states and the EU.

As if the EU is somehow more sharply capitalist, anti-worker, and neo-liberal than the member states. In Britain more than any other country we have seen successive national governments, both Tory and New Labour, repeatedly objecting to EU policy as too soft, too "social", too likely to entrench too many workers' rights.

As if the answer is to pit nations against Europe, rather than workers against bosses and bankers.

When *Socialist Worker*, in a recent Q&A piece, posed itself the question, "wouldn't things be better for workers if Britain pulled out of the EU?", it answered itself with a mumbling "yes, but" rather than a ringing "yes".

WORLD

"Socialist Worker is against Britain being part of a bosses' Europe" Oh? And against Britain being part of a capitalist world, too?

Britain would be better off in outer space? Or walled off from the world North-Korea-style? "But withdrawing from the EU wouldn't guarantee workers' rights — the Tories remain committed to attacking us". Indeed. And just as much so as the EU leaders, no?

As recently as 2009, the Socialist Party threw itself into a electoral coalition called No2EU. Every week in its "Where We Stand" it declaims: "No to the bosses' neo-liberal European Union!", though that theme rarely appears in its big headlines.

The RMT rail union, in some ways the most left-wing union in Britain, backed No2EU and today backs the "People's Pledge". This "Pledge" is a campaign to call for parliamentary candidates to demand a referendum on British withdrawal from the EU, and support them only if they agree.

It was initiated by, and is mostly run by, right-wing Tories, but fronted by a Labour leftist, Mark Seddon. It is backed by many Tory MPs — and by some Labour left MPs such as Kelvin Hopkins, John Cryer, and Ronnie Campbell, and by Green MP Caroline Lucas.

The referendum call is a soft-soap demand for British withdrawal, based on the hope that a majority would vote to quit. (In a recent poll, 55% of people agreed with the statement "Britain should remain a full member of the European Union", but 55% also agreed with the statement "Britain

should leave the European Union", so...)

Even the demand for withdrawal is a soft-soap, "tactical" gambit. In principle Britain could quit the EU without disrupting much. It could be like Norway, Iceland, Switzerland: pledged to obey all the EU's "Single Market" rules (i.e. all the neo-liberal stuff) though opting out of a say in deciding the rules; exempt from contributing to the EU budget but also opting out from receiving EU structural and regional funds.

That is not what the no-to-EU-ers want. They want Britain completely out. They want all the other member-states out too. A speech by RMT president Alex Gordon featured on the No2EU website spells it out: "Imperialist, supranational bodies such as the EU seek to roll back democratic advances achieved in previous centuries... Progressive forces must respond to this threat by defending and restoring national democracy. Ultimately, national independence is required for democracy to flourish..."

BACKGROUND

For decades "anti-EU" agitation has been like background music in the left's marketplace — designed to soothe the listeners and make them more receptive to the goods on offer, but not for attentive listening. If the music should be played at all, then it should be turned up now.

But do you really want the EU broken up? What would happen?

The freedom for workers to move across Europe would be lost. "Foreign" workers in each country from other ex-EU states would face disapproval at best.

There would be a big reduction in the productive capacities of the separate states, cut off from broader economic arenas.

Governments and employers in each state would be weaker in capitalist world-market competition, and thus would be pushed towards crude cost-cutting, in the same way that small capitalist businesses, more fragile in competition, use cruder cost-cutting than the bigger employers.

There would be more slumps and depression, in the same way that the raising of economic barriers between states in the 1930s lengthened and deepened the slump then.

Nationalist and far-right forces, already the leaders of anti-EU political discourse everywhere, would be "vindicated" and boosted. Democracy would shrink, not expand. The economically-weaker states in Europe, cut off from the EU aid which has helped them narrow the gap a bit, would suffer worst, and probably some would fall to military dictatorships.

Before long the economic tensions between the different nations competing elbow-to-elbow in Europe's narrow cockpit would lead to war, as they did repeatedly for centuries, and especially in 1914 and 1939.

The left should fight, not to go backwards from the current bureaucratic, neo-liberal European Union, but forward, towards workers' unity across Europe, a democratic United States of Europe, and a socialist United States of Europe.

Alliance for Workers' Liberty

Right wing hammered in Italy's elections

By Hugh Edwards

The former government parties of Silvio Berlusconi and Umberto Bossi were emphatically defeated in Italy's administrative elections of 6-7 May.

The success of Genovese comic Beppe Grillo's "Five Star Movement" was another notable feature. Grillo is the radical-populist scourge and bête-noire of the whole bourgeois political order in Italy.

Berlusconi's party lost 61% of its support compared with the same elections two years ago, even in its major strongholds, while La Lega of Bossi fared even worse. In its heartlands it lost 67%, and 30% in localities of populations under 15,000.

Already having lost Milan a year ago in the first signs of mounting disaffection, the former coalition has now lost in nearly every major city in the north (gaining only Genova, a vile redoubt of reaction even before Bossi and co. arrived there 10 years ago). The crisis of the centre-right is profound. Berlusconi sustains (just!) the Monti government, while La Lega calls for his head, frantically posing as a principled opponent to policies whose substance and spirit it embraced in years of power-sharing with Berlusconi.

LOST

The (social-democratic) Democratic Party lost 91,000 votes — 60,000 in the North.

Significantly, it lost 20,000 in the traditional bastions of "red Italy" — Toscana, Emilia and Marche. Here, in a reflection of the overall picture, abstention was high. Nationally it averaged more than 10%. There was a decline of 16% for the more "radical" elements of the centre-left coalition (including Rifondazione Comunista), underlining the critical weakness of forces which are increasingly impotent before capitalism in crisis. How could it be otherwise, when self-professed "communists" and "socialists" have once again hitched themselves to the parliamentary wagon of the Democrats? This is a force that has been, and will remain, the principal instrument of support for the present government and its rampant assault on the very masses these "radicals" claim to champion.

Beppe Grillo

It is a spectacle that is as farcical as it is shameful and humiliating, revealing once more that these forces have learnt nothing from the debacle of their opportunist role in the collapse of the last Prodi-led centre-left government.

CYNICAL

The recent announcement by the left leaders of the foundation of a movement of "social opposition to the Monti government" — appealing to all the forces of the left to join, and appealing for the union leaders to call a general strike (i.e. a one-day affair) is a cynical attempt to create another left bloc.

The only real victor in the election was the "Five Star Movement" of Beppe Grillo, sometime comedian and now the bête-noire of Italy's establishment and bourgeois media. It stood in 101 councils out of 941 and won 240,000 votes — nearly 9% nationally. But in the north, it doubled, trebled, and quadrupled its vote, especially in the cities, where next week some of its candidates will figure in head-to-head run-offs with the Democrats for the mayoral seats.

Grillo and his supporters abjure any notion of a "party", a term poisoned by its association with the "ideologies" of "left" and "right", "capitalism" or "socialism" — all of them, in the view of Grillo and his supporters, instruments and expressions of a wholly corrupt order. The movement constitutes itself through online organising. Its generally

radical, plebeian-democratic openness explains its rising appeal. Compared to the fervency with which Grillo and other "Five Star Movement" leaders challenge the corruption at the heart of Italy's political system and push for openness and accountability, the revolutionary left look like Boy Scouts.

Grillo's populism offers no way out of the present situation enveloping the masses, and his successes will increasingly sharpen the contradictions of a force whose members generally have at one time or another identified with or been sympathetic to the left.

Grillo himself is an loose cannon. In February 2012 he responded to Monti's declaration that citizenship rights would be given to the children of immigrants by issuing a racist denunciation, provoking conflict and resignations within his movement. More recently, he announced support for Italy's withdrawal from the Euro, garbling half-baked economic speculations. He is acutely aware that there are forces of the right listening appreciatively to him, and recognises that the eclipse of the right, with the increasing fragmentation of the parties and electorate, offers him a growing opportunity to fill the vacuum.

His thirst for power becomes more discernible the more he tastes it.

Defeat for Merkel

Angela Merkel's Christian Democratic Union had its vote drop by 8% in provincial elections on 13 May in Germany's most populous state, NRW.

The SPD (equivalent of the Labour Party) gained 5%, and the SPD/ Green coalition in NRW now has a majority where before the election it was a minority government.

The maverick Pirate Party went up from 2% to 8%, and, maybe in part as a result, the leftist party Die Linke went down from 6% to 3%.

This result will increase the pressure on Merkel to modify the EU's hard-neoliberal policy by adding in some "growth initiatives".

Hollande: the party of order?

By Ed Maltby

Following the French presidential elections, which returned centre-left Parti Socialiste candidate Francois Hollande, the French legislative elections will take place on 10-17 June. These elections will elect 577 representatives into the National Assembly, the lower house of France's parliament.

These elections will decide whether Hollande's victory over Sarkozy turns into a rout of the UMP. It will also be an important political staging post for the far left to agitate for a socialist alternative to austerity from right or left.

Generally, the party that wins the Presidency gets the majority in the National Assembly straight after. Sarkozy's right-wing UMP party is pulling out all the stops to prevent that from taking place. Leaving behind divisions which arose in the aftermath of defeat in the Presidential election, they are scaremongering about the profligacy of a Hollande presidency and warning that the middle classes will bear the brunt of the financial woes that a move away from strict austerity will bring about.

Also, in an attempt to steal votes from the resurgent far-right Front Nationale, the UMP is warning that Hollande will give immigrants free rein — part of their election pledge is to minimise the political rights of immigrants: to campaign against their having the right to vote in local elections, for example, which the PS has mooted.

The Front Nationale, having received 18% in the Presidential election and (arguably) succeeded in forcing Sarkozy to adopt many of their xenophobic, racist policies on Muslims, halal meat and immigration, is fielding candidates in 350 of the 577 constituencies in an attempt to make a comeback to the Assembly on the back of a programme of right-wing anti-Europe Keynesianism and racism.

With all the left-wing rhetoric of the Presidential campaign, you might expect the PS to be fighting the legislative

elections with a robust defence of their most leftwing policy. But in fact they are placing the accent on an orderly handover and the need for the PS to get a majority in the assembly "to allow the President to govern".

Hollande's first major engagement will be a meeting of European heads of state on 23 May to discuss the economic crisis — both the beleaguered German Chancellor Angela Merkel and the money markets will put pressure on Hollande to firm up his public commitment to austerity and eliminating the fiscal deficit. It is unlikely that Hollande, keen to present an image of continuity and stability to the world markets, will resist this pressure.

The far left — Lutte Ouvrière and the New Anticapitalist Party (NPA) — is standing in these elections mainly to make propaganda against the right and also to lay down a political marker against Hollande's likely course of implementing a "leftwing" version of austerity, starting with pension reform in the Autumn, and likely job cuts in the public sector.

Jean-Luc Mélenchon's left-reformist Left Front, mainly composed of Communist Party activists but also leftwing PS members who split in 2009, is tipped to get 10% of the vote, and enter the Assembly with around 19 deputies (of whom 16 are likely to be Communist Party members). Some of the left have responded to the relative success of Mélenchon and the Left Front with euphoria. While it will be good, by and large, for more-leftwing views to be represented in the Assembly, the character of those leftwing views matters — and the limited politics of the Left Front reduce the good their deputies will do to French politics.

And in place of triumphalism, it would be useful to reflect on 1981, when the PS allowed Communist Party deputies to form a joint government with them under Mitterrand. Far from allowing far-left ideas into the mainstream, the result of that collaboration was a breakdown in support for the Communist Party and Mitterrand's PS soon turning to "austerity".

Above: mass demonstration against austerity in Spain, May 2012

Spain nationalises bank

On 10 May the Spanish government nationalised Bankia, a conglomerate bank formed in 2010 by merging a large number of smaller banks which had suffered from the crash of property prices, and the going-bad of many property loans, in Spain.

Since the extent by which Spanish government bonds trade at lower prices than bonds of the same face-value issued by Germany or other financially-stronger states has grown to its biggest-ever, bigger even than before the last EU "rescue" measures in late 2011.

Many economists think it likely that Spain will fall into a similar spiral to Greece: harsh cuts will depress the whole economy, thus depress government tax revenues, and thus make the government's debt problem and lack of creditworthiness even worse.

Marx: the shortlist

By Martin Thomas

Capital volume 1 was Marx's "chief work". You can read it a dozen times, and learn something new each time.

Yet, as Marx himself wrote in a preface: "With the exception of the section on value-form [chapter 1 section 3]... this volume cannot stand accused on the score of difficulty. I presuppose, of course, a reader who is willing to learn something new and therefore to think for himself". The first-time reader who makes an effort will get the main points.

There are 50 large volumes of Collected Works of Marx and Engels. Where, apart from *Capital*, should a student start? What were the chief texts in which Marx stepped back a little from current events and directly addressed basic and epochal questions?

In *Capital* volume 1 Marx referred back to just four of his previous writings, other than the 1859 *Contribution to the Critique of Political Economy* (essentially a first draft of parts of the first three chapters of *Capital*).

Those four texts were: *The Poverty of Philosophy* (1847); *The Communist Manifesto* (1848); *Wage Labour and Capital* (1847); *The 18th Brumaire of Louis Bonaparte* (1852).

In the preface to the *Contribution to the Critique of Political Economy*, Marx gave a list of previous writings which he considered of permanent value; again, four of them, but in place of *The 18th Brumaire* (where the general ideas are closely entwined with detail of French politics in 1848-51) Marx cited *On the Question of Free Trade* (1848).

After *Capital* volume 1, Marx completed just one other substantial work for publication: *The Civil War in France*, his account of the Paris Commune of 1871.

I'd argue for including seven other titles in a list of "basic" texts: the *Theses on Feuerbach* (1845), the *March Address* (1850), the *Inaugural Address and Rules of the First International* (1864), *Wages, Price and Profit* (1865), the *Critique of the Gotha Programme* (1875), the *Circular Letter* (1879), and *Socialism, Utopian and Scientific* (1880: written by Engels in collaboration with Marx).

Wages, Price and Profit is, I think, best read together with *Capital* (between chapters 10 and 11). Omitting that and *The 18th Brumaire* that leaves us a list of 11 starter texts supplementary to *Capital*.

WON OVER

Marx started adult life as a university student of law and then philosophy, writing a doctoral dissertation on Greek philosophy in 1841.

He was a radical democrat, and philosophically influenced by Ludwig Feuerbach, a student but also a sharp critic of Hegel, who wrote a slashing critique of Christianity and would in old age join the German Social-Democratic Party.

He worked as a journalist on a liberal newspaper, then in late 1843 moved to Paris, and for the first time came into contact with working-class socialist organisations. They won him over.

Marx still felt he had much work to do to sort himself out in philosophy, and with Frederick Engels, with whom he collaborated from August 1844, he wrote about it. Eventually he "willingly... abandoned the manuscript to the gnawing criticism of the mice", and moved on.

The *Theses on Feuerbach* were written as part of that effort in spring 1845. Engels discovered the *Theses* much later, in 1888, and published them "as the first document in which is deposited the brilliant germ of the new world outlook" which Marx was developing.

Marx would write that "the salient points of our [his and Engels's] conception were first outlined in a scientific, although polemical, form in my *Poverty of Philosophy*". The title itself, *Poverty of Philosophy*, signalled a turn away from philosophising to scientific and empirical investigation.

Pierre-Joseph Proudhon was the most influential writer of the time among socialists where socialists were strongest, i.e. in France. Marx had initially been favourably impressed by the Proudhonist-influenced workers' circles in Paris and by Proudhon himself.

As he thought through his new communist commitment, Marx became increasingly critical of Proudhon's historical schematising, his use of would-be Hegelian dialectics, his approach of seeking a new synthesis which would continue the "good side" of bourgeois society and discard the "bad side", and his indifference or even hostility to workers' trade-union struggles. (The socialism which Proudhon advocated was a sort of federation of workers' cooperatives, between which economic justice would be ensured by regulated fair exchange and the absence of interest charges.)

The *Poverty* contains passages difficult for today's reader because of detailed references to ideas of Proudhon's no longer influential, but also sharp and vivid passages from Marx on how human history evolves and what scientific dialectics should be. Marx argued that "it is the bad side that



First edition of *The Poverty of Philosophy*

produces the movement which makes history, by providing a struggle", and that the elemental workers' struggle, for wages and for the defence of the workers' own organisations, provided paths by which the working class could "constitute itself as a class for itself".

Modern editions include, alongside *The Poverty* itself, two summaries written by Marx himself of the book's main points (a letter and an article). Reading those first helps.

In February 1845 Marx had been expelled by the French government, and for the next three years, until the outbreak of the revolutions of 1848, he lived in Brussels. There, he became more involved in active political organising. From early 1846 he and Engels initiated a Communist Correspondence Committee (CCC). In early 1847 they and other CCC members were convinced to join a longer-established communist group, the League of the Just, which would soon rename itself Communist League.

Marx and Engels quickly became influential in the Communist League, and hastened its evolution away from organising secret groups (in the hope of one day introducing communism by armed coup) towards a strategy based on the mass self-mobilisation of the working class for its collective interests and for democracy.

The *Communist Manifesto*, written between December 1847 and February 1848 as a new manifesto for the League, summed up that conception. *Wage Labour and Capital* and *On the Question of Free Trade* were ancillary texts of the same period.

1848

From February 1848, revolutions broke out across much of Europe. They were essentially democratic revolutions, led by the middle class, against old monarchies, but the working class emerged with an independent voice and role for the first time on a large scale.

Marx was active in the revolution in Germany. But the democratic upheavals were, essentially, defeated everywhere, though often their after-effects could be seen in modifications which the victorious despots subsequently felt necessary. Marx had to move to Paris in mid-1849, and shortly afterwards to London, where he would spend the rest of his life.

The *March Address* was a manifesto written from London in 1850 in the hope (unfounded as it turned out) that the revolution would soon revive. It summed up lessons from 1848-9. It formulated clearly, for the first time, the idea of the independence of the working class as the guideline of Marxist politics.

Many other leaders of the Communist League also ended up in London. In exile, disputes brewed. In September 1850 the Communist League split, and both factions soon withered.

The conventional summary, given apparent authority by comments by Marx and Engels themselves, is that Marx then withdrew from active politics for the next 14 years and turned to research in economics.

It is not quite true. When the First International was founded in 1864, Marx was quickly brought on to its committee as the "representative of the German workers", a status which proves that he had remained in circulation among the radical German workers exiled in London, and he quickly brought a number of other Communist League veterans along with him.

He had also spent much time studying. From 1857-8 onwards he wrote a succession of notes and drafts from which he would later produce *Capital* volume 1 and which provided the basis for Engels's compilation of volumes 2 and 3

and Kautsky's compilation of three volumes entitled *Theories of Surplus-Value*.

In those studies he made two major breakthroughs. In his early texts Marx agreed that wages would gravitate to a physical-subsistence minimum (the "iron law of wages"). In fact wages are determined by "subsistence" only with the qualification that "subsistence" depends on "the level of civilisation" and "habits and expectations", not just bare physical requirements.

Marx also found that whereas previously he had followed other economists in talking of "labour" being bought and sold, in fact what workers sell is *labour-power*, not labour. Engels's introduction to an 1891 edition of *Wage Labour and Capital* would provide the crispest explanation of this point.

The British labour movement in this period was at a low ebb. Trade unions were almost all unmilitant craft unions, not advancing politically beyond the Liberal Party. Socialist discussion was confined to small circles of ageing Chartists and Owenites.

The First International, from 1864 to the early 1870s, recreated a mass political labour movement, and Marx got involved. For it he wrote his third "manifesto", the *Inaugural Address* and the *Rules*.

There for the first time Marx spelled out that "the emancipation of the working classes must be conquered by the working classes themselves". He also showed that the working class could raise itself to greater strength even within capitalist society by battles in which, though only on partial questions, workers could win victories for the principle of "social production controlled by social foresight, which forms the political economy of the working class".

COMMUNE

In 1871 the working class took political power for the first time, though only for nine weeks and in one city — the Paris Commune).

Marx responded with a pamphlet for the First International, *The Civil War in France*. For him the vindication of the workers' struggle was more important than the fact that some of the prominent English trade unionists in the First International were alarmed and antagonised by his defence of the Commune.

The Commune, wrote Marx, had shown that "the working class cannot simply lay hold of the ready-made state machinery, and wield it for its own purposes". The working class had to "break the modern State power" and replace it a "working-class government", a "political form at last discovered under which to work out the economic emancipation of labour".

The First International collapsed in the 1870s, and by then Marx was in ill-health. He would write two important texts which are almost manifestos, in the form of critiques of programmatic documents produced by German comrades.

The *Critique of the Gotha Programme* (1875) is the most mind-rattling of Marx's texts. Marx cites the clauses of a German socialist manifesto, one after the other. Almost every first-time reader thinks, as they read each clause: "That looks all right. What could Marx object to in that?" And then Marx shows the clause to be nonsense. The *Critique* is usually published with a letter from Engels which serves as a good introduction for the first-time reader.

In 1878 the German socialist movement was forced to move most of its activity underground or into exile by new repressive legislation, which would last until 1890. Some of its leaders responded by advocating a milder, less aggressively and distinctively working-class, approach.

Marx and Engels wrote a blistering reply, the *Circular Letter*. "We have stressed the class struggle between the bourgeoisie and the proletariat as the great lever of the modern social upheaval... We cannot ally ourselves with people who openly declare that the workers are too uneducated to free themselves and must first be liberated from above..."

Capital contains little directly about politics, Marx's earlier political writings lacked the fully-developed analysis of capitalist dynamics made in *Capital*, and the *Gotha Critique* and the *Circular* were polemics rather than straight expositions.

In 1877-8 Engels wrote a response to Eugen Dühring, a Berlin professor who was winning influence in the German socialist movement with a doctrine in some ways similar to Proudhon's. Marx read Engels's whole text before publication, and himself contributed a chapter of it.

Some of Engels's *Anti-Dühring* is clogged up for today's reader by its close engagement with Dühring's writings (voluminous, idiosyncratic, inaccessible and unimportant today). But Engels wrote whole large sections of *Anti-Dühring* as straight exposition: a new synthesis of political manifesto and economic-historical analysis.

Those large sections were extracted and reassembled into a pamphlet under the title *Socialism, Utopian and Scientific*.

Neither Washington nor Moscow: those were the days

We continue our series of recollections and reflections from activists who were involved with the “third camp” left in the United States — those “unorthodox” Trotskyists who believed that the Soviet Union was not a “workers’ state” (albeit a “degenerated” one), but an exploitative form of class rule to be as opposed as much as capitalism. They organised under the slogan “neither Washington nor Moscow”.

Workers’ Liberty has, over a number of decades, attempted to rediscover and re-examine the tradition of “third camp” socialism, and attempted to learn from it. This symposium brings together the reflections of activists from both the “first generation” of third camp organisations — the Workers Party, which split from the American SWP in 1940 and became the Independent Socialist League in 1949, before entering the reformist Socialist Party of America in 1957 and dissolving — and the “second generation” — the Independent Socialist Clubs of America (founded in 1967 as a federation of loose third camp groupings on various college campuses which were founded some years earlier), and later the International Socialists (founded in 1968).

This week, we publish contributions from people of two generations, David Finkel, who is now an editor of the *Against the Current* magazine in the US, and Marty Oppenheimer, who has been active in developing radical sociology.

Longer versions of the contributions will be available to read online, at tinyurl.com/thirdcampsymposium.

Daniel Randall

By David Finkel

I’m writing here, in my personal capacity, as a proud supporter of the third camp socialist tradition, but let me first share the results of some original research I’ve carried out to prepare this contribution: I consulted a calendar, and discovered that the current year is not 1942, or 1952 or 1962, or even 1982.

In the year 2012, we should not expect the theories, slogans and perspectives of socialists who confronted World War II, the Korean War, the Cuban missile crisis, Vietnam or Polish Solidarnosc to deal adequately with the world twenty years after the collapse of the Soviet Union, and with capitalism both triumphant and in deep global crisis.

That goes both ways, of course. If we’re going to assess the legacy of those who struggled within a labor movement and a left polarised between pro-Western and Stalinist-ori-

ented forces, it’s important to put ourselves into their world, not to posture as if the questions of the 1950s were identical to those we face now.

Third camp socialism arose (from a split within the Trotskyist movement) as a call for an independent “camp” of the international working class and oppressed nations, counterposed first to the imperialist camps of World War II and subsequently to the capitalist and Stalinist (“bureaucratic collectivist”) systems that divided and sought to rule the postwar world.

It is clear in retrospect — but was not at all evident at the height of the Cold War — that the struggle between the two rival social systems was a very uneven one. Despite its monstrous totalitarian power over its citizens and subjects, the bureaucratic system was a debacle in meeting the basic needs of its population — and when as in 1970s Poland it turned to western financing to meet consumer demands, its inherent economic failings rapidly brought it into terminal crisis. Even if the leading publicists and polemicists of third camp socialism, particularly Max Shachtman, may not have fully understood this imbalance, the overriding strength of the tradition lay not only in its principled rejection of capitalism or Stalinism as “lesser evil” or “progressive” relative to each other, but in its unconditional support of democratic and liberation struggles, both in their own right and as critically important pre-conditions of the struggle for a socialist future.

CHICAGO

I joined SDS in 1965-66 at the University of Chicago, where the chapter was heavily influenced by third camp ideas.

Through this connection, I was able to escape the blandishments of Castroism and Maoism — while along with a generation of new radicals, I learned from the Vietnam war just how bloodthirsty liberal imperialists in power could be.

When SDS imploded in 1969, some of us gravitated to the newly formed International Socialists (IS). During its organisational life from 1969 until our merger in 1986 into a new organisation, Solidarity, the IS maintained the principles at the core of the “third camp” — working class loyalty, and democratic values. In particular, these principles undergirded our commitment to a rank-and-file, working-class perspective, helping give rise to some important initiatives most notably in the Teamsters’ union.

This is not to claim we were alone in building struggles

within the unions — quite the contrary, numerous political tendencies threw their energies into the workers’ movement, and many did outstanding work there. What I believe we can proudly say — even though we were by no means immune to inflated ultra-left expectations of imminent “mass radicalisation,” or delusions of how large and strong our organisation would soon become — is that the IS didn’t ask our comrades in the unions to subordinate the interests of their rank-and-file organising, and their loyalty to their fellow workers, to the perceived needs of some get-rich-quick “party-building” scheme.

What’s equally important, if the IS “apparatus” had ever made such demands on our members in rank-and-file work, they would have told the leadership in no uncertain terms where to get off. As an inexperienced organisation we had plenty of mistakes, failures and missed opportunities, but we had no leadership cults or worship of some mythical socialist motherland.

Like many of our predecessors in the third camp socialist movement and the broader left, the IS suffered and declined with the defeat of a wave of working class militancy (in our case, the defeats of the later 1970s and the onset of the Reagan regime). By the mid-1980s we concluded, from our own experience and from the rapid changes in the world both positive and negative, that maintaining an organisation around our own or any other particular theory of the degeneration of the Russian Revolution was no longer fruitful or even viable.

We were not alone on the left, of course, in our rethinking. While a great portion of former “Marxist-Leninist” currents opted for variants of left reformism, the IS found itself in convergence with comrades coming from Fourth Internationalist or socialist-feminist experiences. This “regroupment” led to the formation of Solidarity in 1986.

The third camp socialist tradition, in my view, has played a critical role in maintaining a vision of socialism-from-below rooted in working class self-emancipation and the fullest extension of democracy — the same principles that guided the work of Marx, Engels and Luxemburg.

At the same time, the calendar I mentioned before tells me that the politics of socialism-from-below are no longer uniquely embedded in the classic third camp formula of “Neither Washington Nor Moscow.”

● David Finkel is an editor of *Against the Current* magazine, published by Solidarity. This contribution represents his personal view.

The third camp left in 1957

The following are extracts from the diary of Marty Oppenheimer, reproduced with the author’s permission.

Marty Oppenheimer joined the Young Socialist League (YSL), the informal youth group of the Independent Socialist League (ISL — formerly the Workers Party), in 1956 while at graduate school at the University of Pennsylvania (Philadelphia).

He chaired the Philadelphia “Third Camp Contact Committee”, later the Third Camp Forum, in 1957.

Following the ISL’s entry into the Socialist Party (SP), Marty was a member of the SP’s National Committee but resigned when the SP failed to take a clear position against the Vietnam War.

He was active in the civil rights movement, and since 1970 has been involved in the development of radical sociology caucuses and the publication *Critical Sociology* (formerly *The Insurgent Sociologist*).

January 1, 1957

Just returned from N.Y. and partying including a YSL party. (I am a member now)... We have YSL social-educational every other week; I am Phila. Chairman of the Third Camp Contact Committee, a radical and pacifist education group; negotiations on several levels are under way for discussions with the Stalinists and their new pop front line; ... [MO — I was in grad school at U of Pa at this time (sociology) and working part time for the Central Committee for Conscientious Objectors downtown, although I am not and was not a pacifist.]

June 20, 1957

...as for politics, we continue active but without much progress. The premature organisation by A.J. Muste of the

American Forum on the one hand and Shachtman’s orientation towards the S.P. on the other serves to bisect the movement into a pro-American and a pro-Russian section, with the rest of us left still a sect.

The YSL convention which will approve Shachtman’s ideas is going to leave us third campers and the libertarians in a very weak condition. The Hungarian revolution and the Krushchev revelations have had a tremendous impact on not only the Stalinist movement but also on apathetic radicals. And still the era of sects is not yet over!... Joe McCarthy has died since [last January].

September 19, 1957

I returned from my vacation after a good week at the YSL camp [in Washington, NJ, at a camp owned by and leased to us by the SWP] to find a beehive of activity in Phila: The Trotskyist youth are organizing “Young Socialist Clubs” all over the place, plus a monthly newspaper. Their Phila. version is broader, however, and for the time being more Stalinoid in coloration. We are participating, also organizing a democratic-socialist group, the “New Left Club”.

The third camp Forum (a symptomatic change) will also be busy, but I have stepped down from the chairmanship of that. Meanwhile Howard Fast and Joe Clark have resigned from the CP and their counter-numbers in England are out with a slew of new publications, including Peter Fryer’s *Newsletter* (expelled for writing *The Hungarian Tragedy*) and a *New Reasoner* (expelled for publishing it within the CPGB); also a British version of *Dissent*, *Universities and Left Review*.

Here too things are buzzing and we are talking to many people we didn’t realise existed a year ago. Unity with the SP-SDF is still far off...

A weekend of socialist discussion and debate hosted by Workers’ Liberty
Friday 29 June–Sunday 1 July
Highgate Newtown Community Centre, London N19 5DQ

**Weekend tickets: £24 (waged),
£16 (low-waged/HE student),
£6 (unwaged/FE student)**

AGENDA: <http://alturl.com/8rk8k>

Book now at: workersliberty.org/ideas

Factory occupation wins

By Stewart Ward

Irish workers who occupied their factory after being laid off have won the redundancy payments their millionaire boss initially refused to give them.

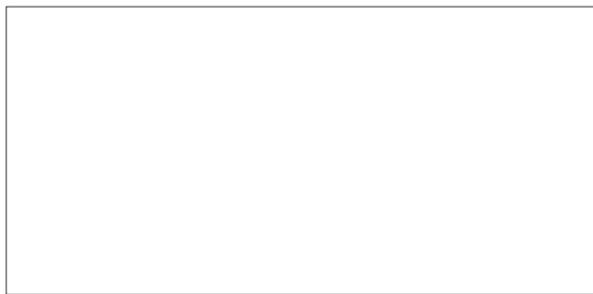
The former employees of the Vita Cortex foam manufacturing plant in Cork, have ended a 150-day occupation of the plant after their union, Siptu, helped negotiate a substantial redundancy package.

Siptu officer Gerry McCormack said: "The workers are very pleased that after four months campaigning to secure equi-

table and fair redundancy payments, which take account of their long years of service at Vita Cortex, they can now return to their normal lives satisfied they achieved their objective."

Greg Marshall, who had worked for the company for nearly 40 years and was one of the workers participating in the sit-in, compared the heroism of the Vita Cortex workers to the spirit of Jim Larkin, James Connolly and the fighters of the 1913 Dublin labour war.

In an article on the workers' website, Marshall wrote: "I played it over and over in my head. How



could we make history? We are just ordinary people. Not like those heroes of old. But [...] we decided to fight for justice. When we stood up to fight we had no way [of knowing] how it would end, or how we would survive like those 1913 workers.

But they were different to us, they had great men like James Larkin and James Connolly to light the way, to be their heroes, we were on our own in those first few days and we certainly could have used some inspiration from big Jim.

"But as word of our oc-

cupation spread, as the Facebook page and Twitter gained momentum and the media covered the story, our Larkins and Connollys emerged from Ballyphehane, from the wider Cork community, from across Ireland and indeed across the seas."

The Vita Cortex workers' victory should inspire other groups of workers, including the locked-out Mayr Melnhof Packaging workers from Bootle, Merseyside, to continue their fight.

It shows that courageous direct action, resolve, and working-class solidarity can win.

Doctors to ballot over pensions

By Clarke Benitez

The British Medical Association (BMA), the professional association for doctors, has begun balloting its 103,000 members for industrial

action.

The BMA is opposed to increases in employee contributions to doctors' pensions scheme, and the raising of the pension age from 65 to 68. Although the BMA has ruled out a

full strike, a positive result in the ballot could see doctors refusing to perform any duties or procedures that could be safely postponed.

Doctors last took industrial action in 1975.

Justice for Dayna!

By a Tubeworker supporter

Tube union RMT has launched a high-profile public campaign to win reinstatement for Dayna Nembhard, a Tube worker and RMT member sacked after defending herself from a racist attack which took place while she was off-duty.

A meeting for union activists on Wednesday 16 May will organise leafletting and petitioning amongst workers on the

Underground. The RMT will also be raising the issue politically through its Parliamentary group and will lobby Dayna's Greater London Assembly member, Navin Shah.

It has already committed itself to move the campaign towards industrial action if this proves necessary.

- For the background to the campaign, see bit.ly/ILiawx

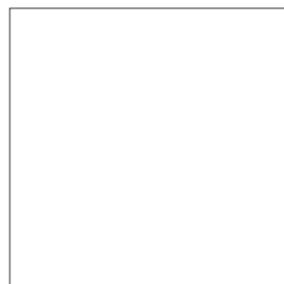
- To sign the petition to support Dayna's reinstatement, visit tinyurl.com/daynapetition

Young workers meet to discuss organising

By Daniel Cooper, President, Royal Holloway Students Union, and University of London Union Vice President-elect

Young workers and working students came together at Goldsmiths College on Saturday 12 May for 'Student Worker Solidarity 2012', an activist gathering organised by the Young Members Network of the GMB union's Southern Region.

Co-sponsored by Goldsmiths Students Union, Royal Holloway Students Union and social justice NGO People & Planet, the event aimed to share experiences, skills and resources for anyone



GMB officer Nadine Houghton opens Student Worker Solidarity 2012

involved in trade-union organising in their workplace or on their campus (and, as is often the case, when those two places are one and the same).

Bar workers employed by their own Student Union swapped war stories with young Tube workers and workers em-

ployed on precarious contracts in un-unionised workplaces traded knowledge with public sector trade unionists from workplaces with 100% union density.

The event represents the start of an attempt by a group of young trade unionists in London and the south of England, particularly in the GMB, to win our unions to a more radical and ambitious strategy for organising the tough-to-crack retail, hospitality, and service sector workplaces where many young people and working students are employed.

Activists interested in pursuing this work will be meeting again in London in June to discuss plans. Watch this space for details, or email dancooper13@hotmail.com

Hackney College workers fight cuts

By Pdraig O'Brien

A bosses' plan to axe 55 jobs at Hackney College in north east London could be met by strikes from further education workers.

The management of the college is proposing the most severe cuts to the institution's budget for 20 years. The cuts do not include any proposals to cut back on senior management pay or conditions but focus exclusively on job losses and course cuts.

Among the courses on the chopping block are ones which help unemployed young people develop the skills to find work.

Rose Veitch, a rep for the University and College Union at Hackney Community College, said: "With youth unemployment at an all time high and total joblessness in Hackney at over 7 per cent, there is a desperate need for a stable and thriving college in the borough. These plans will cut off educational opportunities in

a borough where last year's riots demonstrated the desperate need to invest in tackling deprivation and social exclusion."

Workers and their supporters are holding a public meeting on Wednesday 16 May and plan a march and protest, which will leave the college at noon, on Saturday 26 May.

An earlier meeting of UCU members at the college agreed to ask their union to sanction an official ballot for industrial action.

Tanker drivers accept bosses' offer

By Darren Bedford

A strike by fuel tanker drivers has been averted after workers narrowly voted to accept a deal to end a dispute over safety, job security and minimum standards.

Although the workers' union, Unite, had recommended rejection, 51% of the workers, across seven haulage firms, voted to accept the deal that brings an end to a lengthy dispute which has seen panicked scaremongering from the Tory government.

The deal includes proposals for a drivers' "passport" - an industry-wide checking service as part of a scheme to enforce minimum standards on pay and health and safety. Unite has warned bosses that the vote leaves "no room for complacency".

In a re-run ballot of workers employed by Hoyer which took place before the vote on the deal, 75% voted to take action short of strikes, but only 39% voted to strike. This indicates a genuine lack of confidence in strikes as an effective tool for winning improvements, and clearly the vote on the deal gives Unite no mandate to organise a strike. But it is interesting that an incredibly narrow vote in favour of a deal is seen as a cast-iron mandate to accept in and call off a dispute, whereas similar votes to reject deals (such as the recent vote by Unison members in the NHS to reject the pension deal) are always dismissed by union leaders as insufficient mandates for action.

The 49% of tanker drivers who were prepared to fight on will be feeling deeply frustrated.

They should push their union to set a deadline for implementation of the new deal and pass policy to commit Unite to re-balloting for strikes if the deadline is not met.

PCS needs more than one-day strikes!

By a civil servant

A famous politician once said: "You must be able at each particular moment to find the particular link in the chain which you must grasp with all your might in order to hold the whole chain and to prepare firmly for the transition to the next link".

The task of activists at the annual conference of the Public and Commercial Services union (PCS, 20-22 May) is to determine the next link in the chain of the dispute and to pull as hard as we can to move onto the next link. That means abandoning the present approach of the union leadership; the tactic of the isolated one day strike. This method of fighting is not new to the PCS and has been used, and found severely wanting, in previous disputes as it has in this one.

An emergency motion for PCS conference from the Independent Left (IL) grouping suggests a new way forward.

Members voted to take industrial action on pay and jobs as well as pensions. The pay and jobs part of the dispute has been ignored.

Fighting on jobs and pay maximises the chances to mobilise members. PCS should work to build the widest possible alliance with other unions, but must be prepared to fight alone if necessary. The alternative is to let the fake left leadership of the likes of the NUT determine the pace and tactics of the dispute.

The strike on Thursday 10 May was relatively solid, and perhaps better than could have been expected for an isolated strike several months after the last national action (30 November). But the stale one-day-strike-at-a-time tactic has to be abandoned.

In its place we want as much all-members' action as we think is possible, coupled with selective action, financed by strike levies, in the key parts of the union.

Solidarity & Workers' Liberty

According to the RCN patients are being treated on trolleys in A&E departments. This is due to cuts and acute bed shortages.

NHS cuts bite

By Todd Hamer

Health minister Andrew Lansley was heckled and branded a liar by delegates at the congress of the Royal College of Nursing on 14 May.

His appearance came on the same day that an RCN survey showed 26,000 nursing posts have been cut in the past two years and a further 61,000 posts are at risk.

At the same time there are real term pay cuts, attacks on sickness absence and holiday entitlement, not to mention the dismantling of 63 years of free state-run healthcare.

The Department of Health has said £20 billion cuts can be made by trimming management and by

shifting care out of hospitals and into the community.

But NHS managers are being sacked from the now defunct Primary Care Trusts with good redundancy packages, and then finding work in the newly formed clinical commissioning groups! The severance pay for these bureaucrats will cost the NHS £56.5 million.

Despite evidence that hospitals are discharging patients earlier from hospital, there has been less than a 1% increase in community nursing over the last decade. The early discharges are less to do with better clinical judgement and more a question of bed pressure. Some trusts, like South London Healthcare

NHS Trust, are in the middle of a four year process to cut almost a quarter of their clinical posts.

The move to community care takes on a more sinister aspect with the world of Telehealth.

Telehealth is supposed to be the magic pill which will make huge savings for the NHS and the key to making community services work.

Armed with a few bits of diagnostic technology, some mobile phone apps and the number for a call centre, patients will be allowed to return home and treat themselves.

The Department of Health believes Telehealth could reduce Accident and Emergency admissions by 15%, emergency admissions by 20%, elective admissions by 14%, and bed days by 14%.

To some extent these technologies are to be welcomed — they could lead to a greater democratisation of healthcare. However the technology will also be used by the bosses as a weapon of class struggle.

According to Eoin Clarke's Green Benches blog, Serco, which recently won a £140 million contract to run community services in Suffolk, has told shareholders of their plans to offshore 40% of their Telehealth jobs to India.

● More: page 2

Health Alarm

Mobilise to save the NHS

11:59

PROTEST AGAINST CARE UK

**Private profiteers in the NHS
Wednesday 30 May, 5-6.30pm
St Vincent's House, 21 Great
Winchester Street, EC2N 2JA**

CFGs strike forces concessions

Picket lines at Central Foundation Girls School in east London, where workers are striking against job losses, pay cuts and increases to workload, were well attended on Friday 11 May (the most recent day of action).

The increasingly nervy and confrontational head-teacher repeatedly threat-

ened to call the police because there were more than six people on the picket.

The action has already forced the school management into concessions, and it has now conceded on both job losses and pay cuts, which primarily affected support staff (i.e. Unison members).

Despite accepting management's concessions, support staff have refused

to be divided from the teachers. Had management tried to buy off teachers and leave support staff hanging, the response of National Union of Teachers (NUT) members in the school would have been the same. Unity is what got us this far, unity must be maintained as workers build towards the next strike, on Thursday 24 May.

Please send messages of support to Unison rep Jean Lane at jlane@central.towerhamlets.sch.uk, and to NUT rep Sheila McGregor at smcgregor@central.towerhamlets.sch.uk.

Police against Tories

By Charlie Salmon

On 10 May 20,000 cops joined a Police Federation demonstration against cuts and reforms.

On the same day just 500 public sector workers joined London's strike-day rally against pension cuts.

Trade unionists should take note here — the police mobilisation put that of the labour movement to shame.

In 2010 Tom Winsor, former government advisor on rail regulation under New Labour, was commissioned by Home Secretary Theresa May to review police pay and conditions.

His report proposes a fundamental overhaul of recruitment and promotion structures, pay and conditions of service — including differential pay for officers undertaking more or less dangerous roles and a cut in pay for those failing regular health checks. It also proposes to end standard retirement after thirty years service.

Meanwhile year-on-year, overall police numbers have been falling.

Further cuts in numbers are proposed alongside handing over parts of the police service to private companies. Hence the Police Federation placards which read "Police for Public, Not for Profit".

Winsor's proposals and the government's squeeze on the police budget mirrors cuts and privatisations in schools, hospitals and other public services.

Police officers are currently barred from joining a union and are not permitted to strike. Socialists should support the democratic right of any one or any group to form a union and to strike.

In France, where police have some union rights, in May 1968 the police unions declared themselves in sympathy with the huge workers' strike wave of that month, and unwilling to be used against the workers.

BREACH

We should "support" (or at least take note of) is the disruptive effect that police "trade unionism" or potential industrial action and strikes have on the state.

Such moves expose splits within the state and potentially weaken a government.

Any widening breach between police and Tories presents opportunities for us to strengthen our labour movement campaigns against cuts and privatisation.

But this does not mean socialists and trade unionists should back the Police Federation's stance and see their campaign as at one with the broader anti-cuts movement; or see cops as just "workers in uniform", as the Militant (forerunner of the Socialist Party) used to call them.

The writer of the "Constable Chaos" blog (a serving police officer) says, "I, and virtually all of my colleagues around the country joined the police ... to make a difference; to help people; to make our society better for everyone." All very admirable, but he then continues, presumably referring to recent exposures of police racism: "The world and his dog are allowed to 'have a go' at the police these days. Certainly things have gone wrong from time to time" ...

Things have "gone wrong" — but over and over again. And the apparent good intentions of police officers like "Constable Chaos" come to nothing when the fundamental function of the police is not to solve crimes against ordinary people but to act as part of the coercive, "armed" wing of the state.

WRONG

And what has gone wrong? A disproportionate number of young black men are subjected to stop and search.

Multiple deaths in custody. Attacks on people Ian Tomlinson, killed by cops on a G20 protest. The "mis-handling" of racist murders and attacks. The use of force against protesters. The kettling of demonstrations. The infiltration of campaign groups. Strike breaking. Harassment campaigns. "Protecting" racists and fascists from their opponents...

In short the things that have "gone wrong" tell us the police are racist, authoritarian and a threat to the workers' movement.

We do not automatically support the demands of every strike — we would not support a strike of police to be armed.

We would not welcome a rise of police trade-union

clout like, for example, that of the Queensland Police Union in Australia. In 1995-6 the QPU campaigned publicly and successfully to oust a Labour government on the basis of a secret pledge by the National Party opposition to drastically weaken an investigation into police corruption and misconduct.

The Police Federation's demand for more police on the streets and more visible policing. That is not our demand. We need alternative ideas about how to tackle social disintegration, the petty crime that affects working-class people.

If the Police Federation's were successful in overturning Winsor's proposals the police service would be returned to its normal mode of function — battering our class.

Nonetheless the labour movement needs to monitor and debate the dynamics of the dispute between the Police Federation and the government for it has important implications.

When cops had a union

In 1913 police officers formed their own "union" — the National Union of Police and Prison Officers.

It was a response to terrible pay, working conditions and a rigid, military style hierarchy within the police force. It was influenced by tumultuous labour movement struggles.

As any officer found to be a member of the union or to be attending union meetings could be dismissed, the "union" operated in secret.

In 1918, strikes involving bus, mill, rail and mine workers swept the country. Against this backdrop NUPPO member Tommy Thiel was dismissed for union activities. Though NUPPO membership was very small, the leadership was convinced that if they

called strike action thousands would follow. Up to 12,000 of the Metropolitan Police's 20,000 members struck.

It was the end of World War One. Few experienced soldiers could replace the duties of the striking police men. When Lloyd George summoned the leader of the NUPPO to Downing Street for negotiations, soldiers openly fraternised with the striking police.

The government gave in to the NUPPO's demands.

NUPPO grew exponentially after this point. Lloyd George provoked them into striking by refusing to meet their delegation. The resulting strike had more than 2,000 NUPPO members nationwide taking part, but was broken.

NUPPO was finished.